THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI DIGVUAY SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. During the Sixth Session of the India-China Joint Group on Economic Relations and Trade, Science and Technology held in Beijing on February 21-22, 2000, a bilateral agreement on China's accession to WTO was signed. A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed for setting up a Working Group on Ferrous Metallurgy. The MoU signed *inter alia* provides for supporting and encouraging steel enterprises and companies in mutual trade and cooperation, promoting the increase in export of iron ore and manganese ore from India to China, promoting the increase in export of coking coal and metallurgical coke from China to India, promoting the exchange and transfer of improved iron and steel making technologies, considering the possibility of Chinese participation in the modernisation of Indian Iron and Steel Company, and exchange of information and literature at Working Group meetings.

Import of sensitive items

2464. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are monitoring certain sensitive items of imports;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the objective behind monitoring such imports;

(c) the trends in the imports of sensitive items during the last three months;

(d) whether there is a decline in imports of these items; and

(e) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI DIGVUAY SINGH): (a) to (e) The Government has constituted an Inter-Ministerial Standing Group consisting of Commerce Secretary, Revenue Secretary, Secretary (SSI & ARI), Secretary (Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying), Secretary (Department of Agriculture and Cooperation) and Direcjor General of Foreign Trade. This group has been formed for tracking, collating and analyzing import data of 300 sensitive items. These items include, milk and milk powders, fruits and vegetables, poultry products, tea and coffee, spices, food grains, edible oils, alcoholic beverages, rubber, cotton and silk, marble and granite, automobiles, umbrella, locks, toys, writing instruments among others. The Standing Group has been set up to identify any surge in imports of these sensitive items and to see if any intervention is called for.

Based on the provisional import data available with the Government, the total import of these 300 sensitive items for the period April—June, 2001 has been Rs. 2173 crores against Rs. 2497 crores for the corresponding period of last year, thereby showing a negative growth rate of 13%. No specific reason may be attributable to this short term phenomenon. However, the overall picture that emerges from these quick estimates is one of normal trading activity in response to demand and supply factors.

India's Share in Global Spices and Plantation Market

2465. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has lost its dominant position in the global trade in several spices and plantation products;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the details of factors responsible for this situation; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to enhance India's position in the global trade in these items?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI DIGVUAY SINGH): (a) and (b) India's share (approx.) of exports of spices and other plantation products in the global market is as follows:—

s. No.	Item	India's share in the global market (in per cent) in Qty. terms
1.	Spices	46.00
2	Tea	15.78
3.	Coffee	4.00
4.	Rubber	Negligible

While Indian exports of coffee and rubber have continuously increased during the last three years, there is a slight decline in the Indian exports of spices, as is evident from the data given below:—